[GUIDE TO THE AW50 BADAGA FILE]

[The AW50 Badaga were selected in 1988 as one of the new additions to the Human Relations Area Files. It is a representative sample of cluster 28 of Murdock's world division into 60 major culture cluster areas. The cultural summary which follows was prepared by one of the experts on this area.

ETHNONYMS. Their name Badaga ("northerner") was given because they migrated from the plains of Mysore District, just to the north of the Nilgiri Hills, in the decades following the Muslim invasion that destroyed the great Hindu empire of Vijayanagar in 1565 A.D. Badaga is also a common name for the Gaudas, who are by far the largest phratry in this community. In the 19th Century it was variously spelled Badacar, Badager, Baddaghar, Bergie, Budaga, Buddager, Buddagur, Burga, Burgher, Vadaca, Vadacar, Vuddaghur, Wuddghur.

ORIENTATION. Identification. The Badagas are the largest community in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamilnadu State (formerly Madras) in Southern India, between latitude 11° and 12° N. Location. They occupy only the small Nilgiris District at the junction of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu States, but share their territory with many other tribal groups and an even larger number of fairly recent immigrants from the plains of South India. The District area is 2,549 sq. km., about the same as Rhode Island State. Though the majority of Badagas are still small-scale farmers, there is now a sizeable middle class living in the four main British-built towns on the plateau, and the community can boast several thousand college graduates. Badaga doctors, lawyers, teachers and government officials are very plentiful, and there are also a few professors, agronomists and politicians. Although still largely a rural population, they have as high a rate of literacy (in Tamil and English) as does Madras City. A few households can boast cars and imported videotape players. A dozen doctors, engineers and architects have recently settled with their families in America.
Demography. They number an estimated 140,000 (1990), about 19% of the District population of 630,169 as of 1981. Their progressive attitudes mark the Badagas as an unusually successful farming community. Population figures from the official censuses bear out this success: in 1812 there were reportedly only 2,207 Badagas; by 1901 there were 34,178; today, about 140,000. By developing intensive cash-crop cultivation they have managed to accommodate this greatly increased labor force and improve their standard of living. With birth control in practice now for some twenty years, the annual population growth rate is down to about 1.5% (our estimate). **Linguistic Affiliation.** All Badagas--and only Badagas--speak Badaga, or more correctly Badugu, a Dravidian language. It is now a distinct language, but was derived from 16th Century Kannada (or Canarese) belonging to the South Dravidian sub-family. Today it contains many words of English and Tamil origin, as well as many from Sanskrit. In pre-modern times the language served as a lingua franca among the various Nilgiri tribes. **History and Cultural Relations.** As a community of refugees the early Badagas, after fleeing from the Muslim invaders of Mysore, had to cut their farmsteads out of the Nilgiri forests. They continued some slash-and-burn cultivation there until the eighteen-seventies, by which time the land demands of British tea and coffee planters, then resident for half a century, had created a market in farmland that Badagas were tempted into. For many years now the Badagas have been adapting to their own

use certain alien customs and techniques. Nowhere is this more evident than in agriculture.

SETTLEMENTS. Settlement Pattern. The villages, each inhabited only by Badagas of a particular clan, and usually of no more than several hundred people, consist of parallel rows of stone or brick houses with tiled roofs. They lie along the slope of a hill on its leeward side, for protection from the westerly monsoon. The fields spread out all around. Up to a half-dozen temples and shrines for different Hindu gods are found in each village. Modern villages have electricity and piped water to communal taps, but not long ago the water supply was a nearby stream or at best a channel running into the village from a stream. One other universal feature is a village green, important as a council place, playground, dance ground, funeral place, and general grazing area for the calves. The traditional Badaga two-room houses, still in common use, are built in groups of a dozen or less to form a continuous line along a level piece of ground. They are now made of whitewashed brick, and have tiled or corrugated iron roofs, but the traditional building material was wattle-and-daub. Scarcely any thatched roofs now

ECONOMY. Subsistence and Commercial Activities. In general Badagas use fields around the villages, practice mixed farming of millet, barley, wheat and a variety of European vegetables, two of which--the potato and cabbage--have now assumed major commercial importance. Millets were the staple until this century, and were sometimes cultivated in forest clearings by the slash-and-burn technique. Badaga farmers use no irrigation, and rely on the rainfall of two regular monsoon seasons. During this century they have gradually shifted from subsistence farming of traditional grains to cash-crop farming of potatoes and cabbages. After several seasons of disease, the potatoes were recently superceded by numerous small plantations of tea (which was first introduced here by the British in 1835) and cabbage fields. Crops of European origin are now grown on machine-made terraces with the help of chemical fertilizers, lorry transport, improved seed, and even crop insurance; and in the tea plantations, which must maintain standards necessary to ensure that the leaf can find its way into world markets. Herds of buffalo and cows are kept for dairy purposes, less numerous than in the past, and never kept for meat even though most people are not vegetarians. Poultry are commonly kept and ponies occasionally. Bee-keeping is practiced now, but in earlier days only wild honey was collected in the forests. Although potatoes and purchased rice are the staples nowadays, the Badagas traditionally ate wheat and various millets. Their mixed farming produces a good variety of both local and European crops, and the diet may be complemented with some wild forest plants too. Most Badagas are non-vegetarian, eating mutton and occasional wild game. There is no evidence of opium addiction even though this was an opium-producing community in the last century.

Industrial Arts. Although Badagas have been doing building and urban trades for about a century, up till 1930 they looked to the Kotas to supply all of their needs in pottery, carpentry, leather, blacksmithing, silver ornaments, thatching and furniture. Badagas include no specialized artisan phratries or subcastes.

Trade. This community is well-known for its complex symbiosis with the Toda, Kota and Kurumba tribes of the Nilgiris. Some Badaga villages also maintain exchange relations with the Irulas, Uralis, Paniyas and Chettis of the surrounding slopes. The closest ties are with the seven nearby Kota villages (q.v.). Until 1930 every Badaga family had a Kota associate who provided a band of musicians whenever there was a wedding or

funeral in that family; and who regularly furnished the Badagas with pottery, carpentry, thatching, and most leather and metal items. In return for being Jack-of-all-trades to the Badagas (who had no specialized craftsmen in their own community), the Kotas were supplied with cloth and a portion of the annual harvest by their Badaga associates. The Todas (q.v.), a vegetarian people, were the only group in the Hills whom the Badagas were willing to accept as near-equals. The two communities used to exchange buffaloes and attend each others' ceremonies. Some Todas still supply their associates with baskets and other jungle-grown produce, as well as clarified butter (ghee). In return the Badagas give a portion of their harvest. Since 1930 the relationship has become attenuated, as with the Kotas, largely because the Badaga population has increased out of all proportion to the Todas and Kotas; and also because the Badaga are distinctly more modernized. The Kurumbas (q.v.) are seven tribes of jungle gatherers, gardeners and sorcerers on the Nilgiri slopes. Each Badaga village has a "watchman", a Kurumba employed to protect them from the sorcery of other Kurumbas. He also takes part in some Badaga ceremonies as an auxiliary priest, and supplies his Badaga friends with baskets, nets, honey and other jungle products. The Badaga headman levies for him a fixed quantity of grain from each household in the village. Irulas (q.v.) and Uralis are thought to be sorcerers like the Kurumbas, if less effective ones, and are treated similarly. Some Chettis are itinerant traders who sell knick-knacks on a fixed circuit of Badaga villages once a month. They also have minor ceremonial connections with the Badagas. Paniyas are agrestic serfs on the land of certain Badagas and Chettis who inhabit the Wainad Plateau directly west of the Nilgiris proper. In addition to the economic exchanges described above, the Badagas buy all kinds of goods in the town markets initiated by the British administrators from about 1820 in the District. Trinkets and other small necessities can also be bought from itinerant Chetti merchants who go from village to village on a regular schedule. Division of Labor. A rigid sexual division of labor is apparent. Men do the heavy field work of plowing, sowing, and threshing, while women do the lighter work of weeding and help at harvest. All dairy operations are conducted by men or boys. Women are responsible for preparing food. Children find much of their time taken up with school, although girls are also expected to help in the home. Land Tenure. Badagas acquired their land, legend has it, as gifts from the Kotas (q.v.) and Todas (q.v.) already settled in the area; or they simply cleared new plots from the forests. Up till 1862 such swidden cultivation was still common, but was then prohibited by state law. Their richer and more valuable fields are however the permanent ones close to each village. Irrigation is very rare but terracing is now widespread. House sites often have gardens attached. For over a century each farmer has registered all of his land holdings with the local government, and pays an annual land tax proportionate to the acreage and the quality of the soil. Government also registers non-farmland for such purposes as village site, public grazing, cremation ground or cemetery, temple site, roadway, or government forest.

KINSHIP. Kin Groups and Descent. Each village belongs to just one clan, and commonly contains several lineages made up of numerous extended families. About a century ago a new Badaga Christian phratry emerged, and is now made up of numerous clans each following the usual rules of exogamy. Males always belong to their fathers' extended family, lineage, clan, phratry and village. This is also true of girls, but once they marry they are merged with those social units of their

husbands. There are no family names, though lineages, clans and phratries usually have names, and villages always do. Kinship Terminology. Badagas have a Dakota-type terminology. The cousin terminology is of the bifurcate merging (Iroquois) type.
MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY. Marriage. The favored marriage partner is a cross-cousin, preferably a father's sister's daughter, or else a mother's brother's daughter. But other more distant relatives are acceptable, provided that they belong to the appropriate clan. Beyond this the Badagas have what are, for Hindus, some unusual regulations. Most remarkable perhaps is that hypogamy is as acceptable as hypergamy; marriages may occur between couples coming from certain clans of differential status, yet in these cases it does not matter whether the groom is from the higher or the lower clan. Generation level is recognized as a distinguishing feature of men alone, and women may change their generation levels as they perhaps marry successive husbands belonging to different generations. It is even theoretically possible for a man to marry a woman and her daughter and granddaughter simultaneously, provided he does not thereby marry his own offspring. All three wives would thus attain the generation-level of their co-husband. Gerontogamy--old men taking young wives--is not at all uncommon. Although a dowry has become a requirement during the past few years, it is not a traditional part of the Badaga marriage arrangements. Instead a bridewealth of up to 200 Rupees was, and still is, paid by the groom's family. This sum does not purchase the girl but is payment for the ornaments she brings with her to the wedding, and hence has increased over the years with the price of gold. Every Badaga village belongs to one particular clan or another and hence is exogamous: at marriage a bride has to leave her natal village and move to her husband's. Polygyny is acceptable, though not nearly as common as monogamy. The newly married couple always takes up residence in the husband's natal village, either under his father's roof in a patrilocal extended family, or in a new house built nearby. It is very common for them to sleep in a small room built on the veranda of the father's house, until the first child comes, when they make arrangements to get their own house. Although a young wife may repeatedly visit her own parents for short periods, especially to give birth, the married couple never live with them. Divorce and remarriage are easy for men, even for women, and are acceptable practices. Widows can remarry without adverse comment. Divorce is quite common with the children and all property belonging to the husband.belong to the husband. Domestic Unit. Both nuclear and extended families occur, but the small size of the houses places restrictions on large extended families. They usually split up once the patriarch of the family has died. A nuclear family may often include a mother or close collateral relative who is widowed. Though household servants are now rare, until some fifty years ago there were indentured children from poor Badaga homes working as domestic serfs. Inheritance. Property is impartible until the owner's death, and then the land can be divided equally between his male heirs, normally his sons. An agreement on the partition of the land has to be written down and signed by the beneficiaries, yet there are still many disputes over the inheritance of land. The general principles of inheritance are that male heirs should divide the land and cattle equally among themselves, or alternatively maintain them as a joint property if they continue to be a joint household; that females do not inherit anything; and that the family's home goes to the youngest brother among the heirs. This latter practice of ultimogeniture allows the widowed mother of those

heirs to be housed and cared for by a younger and hopefully vigorous son. If a wealthy man leaves other houses too, these are divided up among his other sons. In poorer families the house is somehow partitioned amongst the sons and their wives, but the youngest son is nonetheless the owner and has to be compensated by them for the space they use. Headmanship of a village or group of villages is hereditary, and passes from one incumbent (before or after his death) to his brother and then to the eldest son of the deceased man. Some household articles or money may be given to a wife or daughters by a dying man, at his request. **Socialization.** Babies are breast-fed for a year, then weaned on solid food; in fact they begin eating boiled rice at 3-5 months. For about a century children have gone to local schools, from the age of six. Younger children usually stay near home during the day, even though their parents may be out working in the fields. Grandparents and other elders stay in the village to mind and educate the small children. In later years the children help with housework and cultivation when needed, and when school obligations permit. The main childhood ceremonies are naming (before the fortieth day), head shaving, ear boring, starting at school, nostril piercing, tattooing (formerly done on girls), milking initiation (for boys at seven or nine), and girls' puberty rites.

SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION. India is a constitutional and democratic republic, and the Badagas have been involved in electing representatives to the state legislature since 1924. But their own traditional sociopolitical organization is still alive too. **Social Organization.** The community is divided into a number of phratries. It is not correct to call these units subcastes, for they are not altogether endogamous and they have no forms of occupational specialization. They are however like subcastes in forming a hierarchy, with the conservative Lingayat group, the Wodeyas, at the top and the headmen's official servants, the Toreyas, at the bottom. Between these two extremes there are one phratry of vegetarians and three others of meat-eaters. It is arguable that meat-eaters and vegetarians constitute two moieties. The Christian Badagas, started by the first Protestant conversion in 1858, now constitute a separate meat-eating phratry ranked below the Toreyas but respected for its progressive habits. Each phratry is made up of several exogamous clans: two each in the case of Toreyas, Bedas and Kumba:ras, three in the case of Wodeyas, and more in the other cases. **Political Organization.** Traditionally, Badagas lived in a chiefdom, and they are still under a paramount chief. This is a hereditary position always held by the headman of Tu:ne:ri village. Below him are four regional headmen, each in charge of all Badaga and Kota villages within one quarter (na:du) of the Nilgiri Plateau. At the most local level a village has its own headman, and several neighboring villages (any number up to 33) constitute a commune. That commune takes its name from its leading village; its headman is also the commune headman. **Social Control.** The Badaga council system still has some influence, although its judicial authority has been greatly undermined by modern lawcourts and the Indian legal system. Each headman has his own council, made up in the case of communes by the constituent village headmen; the regional council is made up of the commune headmen; and the paramount chief's council, rarely called together, consists of all the headmen from all levels. The legal procedure requires that a dispute or crime be considered first by the hamlet council--the headman's judgement being final--but that a decision can be appealed up the hierarchy of councils. Major land disputes and cases of murder

would formerly be brought to the paramount chief after consideration by councils at a lower level. In early times the headmen could dictate severe punishments, including ostracism and hanging. Today the headmen are mainly involved in small disputes and in ceremonial duties, and the district sub-magistrate's court handles more serious cases. **Conflict.** Although inter-village feuding and factionalism are still common, and the massacring of supposed Kurumba sorcerers sometimes occurred in the last century, warfare as such was unknown between the Nilgiri peoples in pre-British days, although it often occurred on the adjacent plains of South India. Badagas have no offensive weapons, only the nets and spears that were once used in hunting. A few now own shotguns for the same purpose.

RELIGION. Religious Beliefs. Except for perhaps 2,500 Christians (Protestants and Roman Catholics in similar proportions, converts since 1858), all Badagas are Hindus of the Shaivite persuasion. A sizeable minority are however of the Lingayat (q.v.) sect, which is almost confined to Karnataka State (formerly Mysore). This is a medieval sect which took Siva as the only deity for them, and which still worships Him through a phallic symbol, the linga. Among Badagas the sect is represented in the entire membership of several clans,namely Adikiri, Kanakka, Kongaru, and the three which make up the Wodeya phratry. **Practitioners.** Most villages have two or three sorts of priest. In addition the Lingayat clans have gurus to perform their special life-cycle rituals, and various Christian missionaries, priests and nuns work in the villages too. Men of Woderu clan, one of the three clans of the high-ranking Wodeya phratry, function as village priests for all non-Lingayat villages. The position is hereditary, and usually lifelong. All Wodeyas are vegetarian and form an endogamous unit, thus maintaining the high standards of purity expected of priests. The Ha:ruva clan, some of whom claim descent from Brahmins, are a non-Lingayat group who also supply some hereditary priests (even though it is widely felt that the claim to Brahminhood is unsubstantiated). In addition some villages have an accessory priest from a Kurumba tribe who, like the other two sorts of priest, helps in the performance of a few annual ceremonies. Ha:ruva priests usually perform regular temple worship and also the life-cycle ceremonies for individual families. All priests are traditionally paid through a levy of grain or other produce from each house in the village they serve. There is no hierarchy of the priesthood, except that the Lingayat gurus, spiritual advisers who perform life-cycle rituals, do belong at the lowest level in a nationwide Lingayat hierarchy. Because of their monthly impurity women never serve as priests. Some however become possessed during ceremonies and become the spokesmen for a god. A few men exorcise ghosts, although this service is often performed for the afflicted by non-Badaga exorcists and charm-makers (mantravadis). **Supernaturals.** The Hindu Badagas, including these Lingayat clans, worship quite a number of gods, all of which are sometimes explained as "aspects" of Siva. These include Mahalinga and Ma:riamma (the smallpox goddess), together with many deities unknown outside the Badaga community, among them the ancestral Hiriodea and his consort Hette. **Ceremonies.** Each village celebrates about a dozen festivals during the year. The most important are Dodda Habba ("Great Festival") which begins the agricultural year in November, and De:va Habba ("God Festival") which celebrates the harvest in July. Ma:ri Habba is intended to keep smallpox away for the year, and is celebrated in a few villages by a fire-walking ceremony in which the devotees walk unscathed across glowing charcoal with no

protection for their feet. Life transitions are marked by ceremonies, including those mentioned above under Child-Rearing and the wedding and the funeral. On rare occasions each Badaga commune used to hold a huge memorial ceremony (manevale) in honor of a whole generation of the dead, once the last member of it had passed away. This was last performed in 1936. **Medicine.** Over the centuries the Badagas have developed their own folk medicine: its practice is largely in the hands of women, and it depends heavily on mixtures of local herbs. Spells are relatively unimportant in curing, though crucial in ghost exorcism. **Death and Afterlife.** The funeral is the most important of life-cycle ceremonies, and the only one to be conducted by the village and its headman rather than by one's own family.

SELECTED REFERENCES. Hockings, Paul Edward (1978) A Bibliography for the Nilgiri Hills of Southern India. New Haven, Ct.: Human Relations Area Files, Inc.; 2 vols. Hockings, Paul Edward (1980a) Ancient Hindu Refugees, Badaga Social History 1550-1975. The Hague: Mouton Publishers; New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. Hockings, Paul Edward (1980b) Sex and Disease in a Mountain Community. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House; Columbia, Mo.: South Asia Books. Hockings, Paul Edward (1982) Badaga Kinship Rules in their Socio-Economic Context, Anthropos 77:851-874. Hockings, Paul Edward (1987) The Man Named Unige Mada (Nilgiri Hills, Tamilnadu).In Folktales of India, Brenda E. F. Beck, Peter J. Claus, Praphulladatta Goswami, and Jawarharlal Handoo (eds.), 125-129. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Hockings, Paul Edward (1988) The Badagas. In Blue Mountains, the Ethnography and Biogeography of a South Indian Region, Paul Hockings(ed.). New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Hockings, Paul Edward (1988b) Counsel from the Ancients: A Study of Badaga Proverbs, Prayers, Omens and Curses. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. Jagor, Andreas Feodor 1876 Die Badagas im Nilgiri-Gebirge. Verhandlungen der Berliner Gesellschaft fur Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte 1876:190-204 (in Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie 8). Jagor, Andreas Feodor 1914 Aus Fedor Jagor's Nachlass mit Unterstutzung der Jagor-Stiftung hereausgegeben von der Berliner Gesellschaft fur Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte unter Leitung von Albert Grunwedel. Jagor, Andreas Feodor I. Band. Sudindische Volksstamme. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer. Thurston, Edgar, and Kadamki Rangachari (1909) Badagas. In their Castes and Tribes of Southern India; I, 63-124. Madras: Superintendent, Government Press.

Source Evaluation

In contrast to other file units in the HRAF archives the AW50 Badaga file is a comparatively small one consisting of slightly more than 1,000 pages contained within nine sources. Despite its physical size, however, the data are well balanced in ethnographic coverage and will provide the researcher with a reliable overview on the Badaga people. There is no single source in this file that gives a broad spectrum ethnographic coverage on the Badaga, but a combination of three of the Hockings sources (sources 2, 5, & 8) used in conjunction with 1: Thurston & Rangachari and 9: Natesa Sastri, would give the reader a fairly well-rounded appraisal of the Badaga people. Cultural and economic history, social and political organization, religion (including information on funerals and concepts of death), kinship, and the economy are all well represented in the sources in this file. History (including economic history) is discussed in 1: Thurston & Rangachari, 2: Hockings, 5: Hockings, and 6: Noble. Social structure

and social and political organization, although frequently mentioned in passing in a number of sources, are given specific treatment in 1: Thurston & Rangachari, 2: Hockings, 5: Hockings, and 9: Natesa Sastri. Religion, including death and funeral practices, is well represented in the literature of this file. In addition to data on general religious beliefs, 1: Thurston & Rangachari also contains information on both religious and funerary ceremonies. Missionization and religious change among the Badaga in the 20th century are two of many ethnographic topics found in 2: Hockings. 3: Hockings presents an analysis, in terms of communication theory, of one Badaga ritual called the "ritual of giving salt to buffaloes". 5: Hockings, in addition to some general information on religious beliefs, also contains data on sects. Initiation rites and funeral ceremonies are two of the many topics found in 9: Natesa Sastri. Kinship and kin groups are another area of particular ethnographic interest in this file. Descriptive data on Badaga clan and phratry organization are to be found in 2: Hockings, with additional information on kin groups and kinship terminology in 8: Hockings. 9: Natesa Sastri presents some information on the characteristics and organization of the Badaga castes. Data on the economy are to be found in 2: Hockings, 5: Hockings, and 6: Noble. Other miscellaneous subjects given coverage to varying degrees in this file are: migrational history, 2: Hockings and 9: Natesa Sastri; place names, 2: Hockings; culture contact, 2: Hockings; social change and law, 2: Hockings and 5: Hockings; communication theory in terms of ritual, 3: Hockings; folk medicine, medical pharmacopoeia, health care, sexuality and reproduction, all in 4: Hockings; geography, 5: Hockings; factionalism, 5: Hockings; marriage, 5: Hockings and 8: Hockings; land use, 6: Noble; folktales, 7: Hockings; and family structure, adoption, inheritance, and visiting patterns, all in 8: Hockings.

Special marking decisions for this file are as follows: <u>woderu</u>, priests -- Category 793; <u>gudu</u>, "tribute" payments by Badaga to the Toda -- Category 648; <u>manegar</u>, a village headman -- Category 622; <u>gauda</u> -- a commune headman -- Category 632; exorcists -- Category 791; communes, made up of several neighboring villages -- Category 632; regional chiefs --Category 634; and <u>mantravadis</u>, a shaman of the Kurumba tribe -- Category 756.

The cultural summary on the Badaga as presented above, was prepared by Paul Hockings. The information on source evaluation was prepared by John Beierle in August 1989.]